Accountability Report
2014–2015

Office of Planning and Priorities
and Executive Council Office

NOVA SCOTIA

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A. Accountability Statement

The Joint Accountability Report of the Office of Planning and Priorities and Executive Council Office (the Offices) for the year ended March 31, 2015, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Offices' joint statement of mandate for the fiscal year 2014-2015.

The reporting of the Offices' outcomes includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by management of the two offices.

The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the joint statement of mandate for the year 2014-2015.

The Honourable Stephen McNeil, President of the Executive Council, Minister of Planning and Priorities

Catherine Blewett, Secretary / Clerk of the Executive Council

Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister Office of Planning and Priorities

B. Message from the President of the Executive Council and Minister of Planning and Priorities

I am pleased to again present the joint accountability report of the Office of Planning and Priorities (OPP) and the Executive Council Office (ECO) for the fiscal year 2014–2015.

OPP focuses on the priorities of government and provides ongoing policy advice and support to government and its departments and agencies. Over the last year, it has also acted as Secretariat for the *One Nova Scotia Coalition* – a multi-partite group of volunteers from across political parties, sectors and regions brought together to draft a 10 year Collaborative Development Plan to address the economic and demographic challenges articulated in the *One Nova Scotian Commission Report on Building our New Economy*.

ECO acts as secretariat to the Executive Council. Working with the Department of Finance and Treasury Board (FTB), ECO manages the province's corporate treasury and policy decisions to ensure they are administered and communicated in a professional and accountable manner on behalf of Nova Scotians.

The economic and demographic challenges faced by our province are complex and long standing. They require government's focused attention and effective collaboration and coordination across its departments, agencies, and beyond. To most effectively support and achieve the priorities of government, enable the public service to collaborate on innovative policy solutions, and ensure all departments and agencies coordinate activities and realize objectives, it is essential that our central agencies effectively manage information and priorities. Looking forward, the Executive Council Office and Office of Planning and Priorities will re-align to maximize results for Nova Scotians.

The Honourable Stephen McNeil, President of the Executive Council, Minister of Planning and Priorities

B. Priorities and Accomplishments

The Offices of Planning & Priorities (OPP), and Executive Council Office (ECO) identified three strategic outcomes for 2014-2015. The Offices are central agencies primarily providing guidance and decision processing to a variety of key stakeholders across government.

Measurement of Performance

In order to measure service performance, the Offices conducted a survey of over 300 "clients" with which they interact on a frequent basis including all departments, public service organizations, and crown corporations.

Questions in the survey related to the effectiveness of services provided and requirements imposed by the Offices. The survey sought feedback on priorities identified in the 2014-2015 Statement of Mandate and the results to provide the baseline for targets and future performance comparisons.

Overall, the response rate to the survey was 26%. This is below the response rate last year of 30%. The number of respondents to OPP questions ranged from 5 to 33 and for ECO, the number of respondents ranged from 10- 43. As a result, there is a fair amount of variation for some questions. The information provides broad based indicators, some of which will require more in-depth follow-up.

Highlights of the survey responses are found under each relevant Core Business Area. The responses for "somewhat agree" and "strongly agree" are aggregated as indicative of the perceived performance for each of the respective Core Business Area issues. Also, each performance measure is addressed in terms of how the Core Business Area will respond to maintain or improve the perceived performance.

The performance of the Public Engagement Support Unit (PESU) was not measured in 2014-15 as their work was largely focused on providing secretariat support to the One NS Coalition. While the PESU did work with some departments on engagement, the bulk of their work was in supporting the work of the Coalition and cannot be measured through an internal survey.

A copy of the performance-related survey questions and gross responses are attached in Appendix A. Verbatim responses to open-ended questions are not provided for reasons of confidentiality.

Strategic Outcome 1: Support to Executive Council and its sub-committees

Outcome: Fully supported Executive Council and Committees

- 72% of the 2014-15 respondents agree that the ECO's submissions guide is useful and informative. This is drop of 21% from the previous year. There were 33 respondents in total. ECO will review the submissions documentation and work towards increasing this measure to a satisfaction level of 85%.

- 90% of respondents agree that ECO provided helpful and timely advice and guidance regarding the submissions process. Last year's response rate was 91%. ECO's goal will be to maintain a measure of 85%.

- 78% of respondents agree OPP provided helpful and timely guidance regarding the submission process down from 6% last year. There were 33 respondents in total. OPP will continue to work to increase this measure to 85%.

- 75% of respondents agree that ECO provided timely advice and guidance regarding the content of submissions. This is a 22% drop from the previous year. There were 33 respondent in total. With the recent restructuring of ECO and OPP departments will have more direct support throughout the entire policy development process. ECO will strive to maintain a satisfaction level of 85% for this measure

- 71% of respondents agreed that OPP provided helpful and timely advice and guidance regarding the content of submissions. This represents a decrease of 14 % in the measure from the previous year. The recent restructuring of OGP will ensure that departments will have more direct support from OPP and all Offices in One Government Place throughout the entire policy development process.

- 92% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that decisions of Cabinet and its Committees were communicated in a timely manner. In 2013-14, ECO reviewed the distribution and communication processes and increased this measure by 17% from 2012-13. ECO continues to strive to maintain a satisfaction level of 85%.

Strategic Outcome 2: Leadership to advance the development of planning and policy capacity and horizontal government

Outcome: Stronger policy capacity and better cross departmental collaboration

- 79% of respondents felt OPP communicated government's goals and priorities clearly. This represents an increase of 11% from the previous year. This will continue to be a priority through OGP restructuring and the delivery of policy support services.

- 40% of respondents felt the OPP facilitated the coordination of policy agendas across departments. 20% of respondents were indifferent. The recent restructuring of OGP should help to address this issue by providing more up front support in departments. OPP will aim to increase this measure by 10%.

- 57% of respondents agree that OPP supported the development and implementation of government's core priorities. This measure is 9% higher than last year. There will be further attention paid to communicating core priorities through more direct with departments through policy development and business planning. OPP will aim to increase this measure by 10%.

- In terms of facilitating the development and implementation of major policy initiatives (other than the government priorities), 47% of respondents agreed that OPP facilitated these efforts, while 27% were indifferent. The recent restructuring of OGP should help to address this issue by providing more direct support in departments and making amore concerted effort for cross departmental collaboration.

- The survey results indicate that work is required to provide better support for the development of policy capacity throughout government. There were 5 respondents to this particular question with 20% agreeing that OPP fulfilled this requirement while 40% were indifferent. The recent restructuring of OGP should help to address this issue by providing more up front policy advice and support in departments.

Strategic Outcome 3: Effective corporate governance and administration

Outcome: Effective and efficient corporate administration and governance

ECO provides policy support and guidance in respect of the governance and accountability of provincial agencies, boards and commissions (ABCs). It also oversees the process of appointment of citizens to ABCs.

- 91% of respondents agreed that the appointments process resources were useful (and increase of 4% from the previous year) and 96% of respondents agreed that they received helpful advice with the ABC appointments process (an increase of 18% from the previous year). ECO provided an information session and provided one on one discussions with ABC departmental contacts to ensure the appointments process and resources were clearly understood by ABC Contacts

- 69% of respondents agreed that they received timely advice and guidance regarding the governance and accountability of a government agency (this is a decrease of 12%) There were 13 respondents. ECO will continue to work at increasing this measure to a satisfaction level of 85%.

- 100% of respondents consulted the Corporate Administrative Policies within the past year. This is an increase of 5% from the previous year. However, only 25% of these respondents receive notifications of amendments to the policies through the listserv. ECO will work to promote the benefit of being a member of the listserv group and work to increase this rate by 25% before the next reporting period.

- While not playing a lead role, OPP provides advice and guidance regarding the governance and accountability of a Government agency. 55% of respondents found this timely and helpful. This measure increased by 5% from last year.

C.Financial Results

	Estimate 2014-2015	Actual 2014-2015	Variance
Total - Gross Current ($000's)			
Office of Policy & Priorities	$2,550	$2,197	($353)
Executive Council Office	$2,299	$1,940	($359)
Total	$4,849	$4,137	($712)
Salaries and Benefits ($000's)			
Office of Policy & Priorities	$2,211	$1,694	($517)
Executive Council Office	$1,627	$1,485	($142)
Total	$3,838	$3,179	($659)
Funded Staff (FTEs)			
Office of Policy & Priorities	19.0	16.2	(2.8)
Executive Council Office	18.0	15.0	(3.0)
Total	37.0	31.2	(5.8)

D. Annual Report Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011. The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labour Board.

A wrongdoing for the purpose of the Act is:

a) A contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
b) A misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
c) An act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health, or safety of persons or the environment, or
d) Directing or counseling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The Offices have no items to report for 2014-15.

Information Required under Section18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2014-2015
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a